

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6303

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 BUJUMBURA 0722

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PINS, BY

SUBJECT: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH PRESIDENT BAGAZA

1. SUMMARY. DURING 105 MINUTES ENTIRELY ALONE WITH PRESIDENT BAGAZA, I RANGED OVER ALMOST ALL QUESTIONS OF INTEREST TO US AND TO WEST ABOUT BURUNDI'S FOREIGN ORIENTATION, ITS INTERNAL STABILITY, POLITICAL RIVALRIES, DEVELOPMENTAL ASPIRATIONS, HUTU-TUTSI RELATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, ATTITUDES TOWARD ZAIRE AND RWANDA, AND THE KOREAN QUESTION. THE LAST THREE ITEMS WILL BE COVERED IN SEPTELS, WHILE THIS GENERAL CABLE SEEKS TO CONVEY THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY REGARDING THE BAGAZA REGIME. IN BRIEF, IT IS A HETEROGENEOUS ADMINISTRATION, WITH MANY CONFLICTING STRAINS PULLING AT A VERY SOBER, INTELLECTUAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, IDEALISTIC AND RELATIVELY MODERATE YOUNG PRESIDENT. HE IS QUITE AWARE OF HIS POLITICAL ENEMIES, WHO TEND TO BE RADICALS IN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY PREFERENCES, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY LESS CONCERNED ABOUT RECONCILIATION WITH THE HUTUS AND A NEW DEAL FOR THE MASSES. BAGAZA IS QUIETLY

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BUILDING UP HIS POWER BASE, AND HIS WATCHWORD TO ME WAS PRUDENCE AND, ABOVE ALL, PATIENCE IN TACTICS. END SUMMARY.

2. I STARTED THE CONVERSATION WITH A GENERAL STATEMENT ABOUT AMERICAN POLICY IN AFRICA UNDER THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, WITH OUR INCREASED PRESSURES FOR PEACEFUL BUT DRASTIC CHANGE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, WITH OUR GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON NORTH-

SOUTH ISSUES, AND WITH OUR DETERMINATION TO INCREASE OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEEDIEST AFRICAN NATIONS, INCLUDING BURUNDI. BAGAZA REITERATED HIS SATISFACTION WITH WASHINGTON'S COURSE AND ADDED THAT HE HAD FOUND SIMILAR REACTIONS AMONG OTHER CHIEFS OF STATE WHOM HE HAD MET IN RECENT MONTHS (MENTIONING NYERERE SPECIFICALLY). HE REITERATED HIS STATEMENT TO ME OF A FEW MONTHS AGO THAT HE FERVENTLY HOPED THAT THE TRANSFER TO MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA COULD BE PEACEFUL, BECAUSE, OTHERWISE, THE DESTRUCTION WOULD BE ENORMOUS AND WOULD SET BACK THE QUEST FOR A DECENT LIFE IN THE AREA FOR 20 YEARS OR MORE. HE INDICATED APPROVAL FOR THE RESULTS OF THE INITIATIVES OF THE WESTERN FIVE WITH SOUTH AFRICA ON NAMIBIA (AFTER I OFFERED A SUMMARY RUNDOWN OF THE NEGOTIATIONS), BUT HE SAID FRANKLY THAT THESE WERE MATTERS IN WHICH BURUNDI COULD PLAY LITTLE ROLE. HE WOULD NOT RPT NOT PERSONALLY GO TO THE OAU SUMMIT IN LIBREVILLE.

3. I TOLD BAGAZA THAT WITH OUR GROWING INTEREST IN AFRICA AND OUR HOPES IN THE NEXT YEARS TO BECOME SUBSTANTIALLY MORE ACTIVE IN FURNISHING BILATERAL ASSISTANCE TO BURUNDI, WE WERE ALSO MORE CONCERNED TO KNOW WHERE HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD BE LEADING THE COUNTRY. IN REGARD TO FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION, WE SAW A TENDENCY TO DISPLACE FOREIGN EXPERTS, WESTERN BUSINESSMEN, AND EVEN SOME MISSIONARIES. I HAD EVIDENCE THAT THE SURETE (SECRET POLICE) CHECKED UP ON U.S. EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH BURUNDIAN FRIENDS AND WORRIED ABOUT THE SUPPOSED PREFERENCES

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OF AMERICAN MISSIONARIES FOR HUTUS. THE MEDIA TALKED MORE ABOUT DIVISIONS AMONG BURUNDIANS BETWEEN REVOLUTIONARIES AND REACTIONARIES, AND THE LATTER WERE LINKED TO "IMPERIALISM", WHICH HAD ANTI-WESTERN CONNOTATIONS. IT WAS A FACT NOT ONLY FOR THE U.S. EMBASSY, BUT FOR ALL WESTERN EMBASSIES, THAT THE REQUIREMENT THAT ALL SOCIAL CONTACTS WITH BURUNDIANS BE ARRANGED THROUGH THE PROTOCOL OFFICE HAD SEVERELY CHILLED SUCH CONTACTS AND LED ALMOST TO THEIR DISAPPEARANCE. IN REGARD TO DOMESTIC POLICY, WE NOTICED EVER TIGHTER CONTROLS OVER PRIVATE BUSINESSES (BURUNDIAN AND FOREIGN) AND AN INCREASING RESORT TO STATE INTERVENTION AND REGULATION AS A CURE FOR ALL ILLS. I COMMENTED THAT STATISM POSED ENOUGH PROBLEMS EVEN IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, BUT IN NATIONS SUCH AS BURUNDI, WITH AN INADEQUATE NUMBER OF WELL TRAINED OFFICIALS, WITH WEAK BUREAUCRATIC TRADITIONS, AND WITH STRONG HABITS OF CORRUPTION, UNBRIDLED STATISM COULD BECOME A REAL BURDEN ON DEVELOPMENT. I REFERRED TO THE PLANNED TOP LEVEL UPRONA PARTY "SEMINAR" IN LATE JULY AND ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BE PROCLAIMING A NEW LEFTIST SHIFT IN BURUNDI'S POLICIES.

4. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT NO MARXIST PROGRAM WOULD BE SET FORTH FOR BURUNDI, AND THE COUNTRY WOULD NOT BECOME A

SOCIALIST STATE. IT WOULD REMAIN NON-ALIGNED, BUT ITS
PRIMARY ORIENTATION FOR DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE ON THE WEST.
THERE WERE MORE NON-GOVERNMENTAL EUROPEANS IN BURUNDI NOW
THAN BEFORE INDEPENDENCE. HE REITERATED THAT HIS REGIME
WAS REFORMIST; IT WAS TRYING TO CREATE A NEW NATIONAL SPIRIT
OF UNITY AND MORALITY. SINCE THE MASSES OF PEASANTS, BUT
HUTUS AND TUTSIS, HAD SUFFERED MOST FROM MICOMBERO'S MISRULE,
HIS GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITY WOULD BE ON REJUVENATING THE COUNTRY-
SIDE AND MODERNIZING IT. HOWEVER, MENTALITIES HAD TO CHANGE
EQUALLY IN THE CITIES. IN THE PAST, A SMALL ELITIST CLIQUE
IN GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS HAD WORKED HAND IN GLOVE TO APPRO-

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INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
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LIMDIS

PRIATE FOR THEMSELVES A LOPSIDED SHARE OF THE NATION'S WEALTH,
AND THIS HAD OCCURRED THROUGH EVERY MANNER OF CORRUPTION AND
ILLEGALITY. OF COURSE, THESE PRIVILEGED PEOPLE WERE NOW
SCREAMING FOR SYMPATHY AS THEY FLET FORCED TO CHANGE THEIR
WAYS. THEY KNEW HOW TO APPROACH FOREIGNERS TO TRY TO GAIN
THEIR SUPPORT. THIS IS WHY THE REGIME HAD QUITE DELIBERATELY
SOUGHT TO CUT OFF CONTACTS WITH DIPLOMATS IN NOVEMBER. BUT IT
WAS NOT RPT NOT TRUE THAT THERE WAS ANY PARTICULAR SUSPICION OF
AMERICANS OR MISSIONARIES. I SUGGESTED THAT DIPLOMATS REALLY
DID NOT RPT NOT WANT TO DEAL WITH POLITICAL HAS-BEENS, BUT
WITH THE MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS NOW ON THE TOP. HENCE, THE
CURTAILMENT OF SOCIAL CONTACTS FOR DIPLOMATS WAS SELF-DEFEATING
FOR THE REGIME. BAGAZA SAID THAT MATTERS HAD NOW EVOLVED FAR
ENOUGH SO THAT A RELAXATION ON CONTACTS COULD START.

5. I ALSO COMMENTED THAT A POLICY OF MODERATE AND CONTROLLED REFORM NEEDED LEADERSHIP. THE PRESIDENT HAD SHOWED THIS DURING HIS TWO MONTH TOUR OF THE PROVINCES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, BUT NOW HE WAS OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT AND SOME OBSERVERS
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SIAD THAT THERE WAS A LEADERSHIP VACUUM. IF THIS WAS THE CASE, OTHER ELEMENTS WOULD TRY TO FILL IT, AND I MENTIONED (UN AMBASSADOR) SIMBANANIYE'S ATTEMPTS TO RETURN TO A JOB IN BURUNDI WHERE HE COULD INTRIGUE MORE SUCCESSFULLY FOR HIS LEFTIST AND ANTI-WESTERN POLICIES. I COULD NOT RPT NOT UNDERSTAND HOW HE AND OTHERS IN HIS GROUP HAD ESCAPED ARREST WHEN 80 OR SO OTHERS HAD BEEN JAILED PENDING TRIAL ABOUT FIVE MONTHS AGO FOR PAST CORRUPTION. I CITED WHAT I HAD PERSONALLY HEARD ABOUT THE EMBEZZLEMENT AND MISAPPROPRIATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS OF SIMBANANIYE, PRIME MINISTER NZAMBIMANA (WHEN HE WAS PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER IN THE OLD REGIME), AND SEVERAL CURRENT AMBASSADORS.

6. BAGAZA SAID I SEEMED TO BE WELL INFORMED EVEN WITHOUT SOCIAL CONTACTS. HE KNEW OF THESE CHARGES AGAINST PEOPLE WHO HELD HIGH POSTS IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, ONE COULD NOT RPT NOT ARREST SUCH PEOPLE FOR TRIAL WITHOUT DOCUMENTARY OR OTHER VERY STRONG PROOF. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEIR CONTINUED PRESENCE IN HIGH POSTS WOULD NOT RPT NOT PREVENT THEIR DISMISSAL AND ARREST IF PROOF WERE FOUND. I ASKED WHETHER HE WAS SAYING THAT, SINCE MOST OF THESE PEOPLE HAD HELPED HIM TO MAKE THE COUP D'ETAT ON NOVEMBER FIRST, HE WAS MORE OR LESS IN DEBT TO THEM POLITICALLY AND THUS HAD TO ACCOMMODATE HIS PRINCIPLES SOMEWHAT TO POLITICAL REALITIES. BAGAZA SAID THAT I MUST KNOW OF THE INHERENT INSTABILITIES IN BURUNDI, WHICH HAD CREATED DIVISIONS BETWEEN ETHNIC GROUPS, REGIONS, AND CLANS. IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO PUT ALL THIS BEHIND THEM IF A MODERN SOCIETY WAS EVER TO EMERGE. HENCE, HE COULD NOT RPT NOT ACT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF FAVORING ONE REGION OVER ANOTHER, OR ONE CLAN OVER ANOTHER. THIS MADE IT ESSENTIAL THAT HE BIDE HIS TIME. I SHOULD KNOW THAT INVESTIGATIONS WERE CONTINUING QUIETLY ALL THE TIME AGAINST THE PEOPLE I HAD NAMED, AND OTHERS. IF ENOUGH EVIDENCE APPEARED, HE WOULD ACT, BUT MEANTIME, THE WATCHWORD WAS PRUDENCE AND, ABOVE ALL, PATIENCE.
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7. COMMENT. THOUGH, IN PARTING, BAGAZA SAID THAT HE HAD ENJOYED OUR CONVERSATION BECAUSE I HAD MADE MY POINTS STRONGLY AND WAS ONE OF THE "RARE" AMBASSADORS WHO TOLD HIM

THE TRUTH, HE STILL DID NOT RPT NOT ANSWER ALL OF MY QUESTIONS DIRECTLY. HE DID NOT RPT NOT DISAVOW THE STATIST TENDENCIES IN THE REGIME, WHATEVER THE DISTINCTION HE DREW BETWEEN THAT AND BOTH MARXISM AND SOCIALISM. I FEEL THAT HE HAS RATHER NEGATIVE FEELINGS ABOUT LOCAL FREE ENTERPRISE AND THAT HE WILL TRY TO REGULATE IT SEVERELY WITHOUT TAKING FORMAL MEASURES TO HALT IT. THIS ATTITUDE HAS LAREADY SAPPED THE CONFICENCE OF LOCAL BUSINESSMEN, AND THEIR HOLDING BACK ON NEW CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND INVENTORY BUILDUP WILL FURTHER PREJUDICE THE REGIME AGAINST THE. ON THE OTHER HAND, BAGAZA WOULD WELCOME FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN BURUNDI BY LARGER SCALE, MORE MODERN ENTERPRISES, AND THIS MEANS THAT IF U.S. AND OTHER INVESTORS EVER DECIDE THAT BURUNDI NICKEL IS AN ATTRACTIVE PROSPECT, BAGAZA WILL MOST PROBABLY ACCEPT THEM EAGERLY.

8. BAGAZA ALSO DID NOT RESPONDE DIRECTLY TO MY QUERIEIS ABOUT THE PARTY LINE THAT WILL EMERGE FROM THE JULY SEMINAR. HOWEVER, BY HIS REMARKS ABOUT SIMBANANIYE AND THE LATTER'S COHORT, PRIME MINISTER NZAMBIMANA, IT IS CLEAR THAT HE RECOGNIZES THE EFFORTS OF THESE MEN TO GAIN A PREDOMINANT POSITION BOTH PERSONALLY AND POLITICALLY TO HIS (BAGAZA'S) DISADVANTAGE. I SENSE THAT THE PRESIDENT IS FEELING HIS WAY TO A CONFRONTATION, BUT, AT ALL COSTS, WISHES TO AVOID A PREMATURE SHOWDOWN. THUS, HE REALLY DOES NOT RPT NOT KNOW JUST WHAT POLITICAL LINE WILL EMERGE A MONTH HENCE, THOUGH HE PERSONALLY FAVORS MORE MODERATION.

9. ABOUT A MONTH AGO, RUMORS SPREAD EVERYWHERE IN TOWN THAT BAGAZA WAS ABOUT TO DISMISS NZAMBIMANA AND OTHER MINISTERS, BUT THIS WAS LATER DENIED AND ASCRIBED TO AN EFFORT BY THE ADHERENTS OF THE OLD REGIME TO SOW CONFUSION. FATHER BARAKANA, THE EX-UNIVERSITY RECTOR, HAS TOLD US THAT THE RUMORS WERE IN FACT CORRECT, BUT THAT BAGAZA BACKED AWAY FROM HIS ACTION BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE

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BEEN UNSEEMLY TO ACT AMIDST SUCH PUBLIC SPECULATION. THIS VERSION RINGS TRUE, AND, IF SO, IT MEANS THAT NZAMBIMANA IS WELL AWARE OF THE CRITICAL CHALLENGE THAT HE AND OTHERS OF HIS (MATANA) GROUP FACE FROM BAGAZA. PERHAPS THIS IS WHY NZAMBIMANA IS TRYING TO BUILD UP HIS OWN MORE RADICAL CONSTITUENCY. FOR INSTANCE, IN A SPEECH AT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

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AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

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LIMDIS

FOR THE CHINESE TEXTILE PLANT ON JUNE 22, NZAMBIMANA DECRIED
"IMPERIALIST" ECONOMIC AID TO BURUNDI WHICH, UNLIKE CHINESE,
ALLEGEDLY TRIES TO BLOCK BURUNDI'S DEVELOPMENT AND TO SADDLE
THE COUNTRY WITH FOREIGN EXPERTS INDEFINITELY INSTEAD OF
TRAINING NATIVE CADRES. IF NZAMBIMANA IS THUS, THROUGH HIS
DEMOGOGY, TRYING TO MAKE HIMSELF INTO A FOLK HERO AND LESS
VULNERABLE TO DISMISSAL BY BAGAZA, WE MAY INDEED WELL BE FACING
A MONTH OF FAIRLY CRITICAL INTERNAL REALIGNMENT FOR THE FUTURE
ORIENTATION OF BURUNDI'S SECOND REPUBLIC.
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Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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